



MEDIA RELEASE

30 October 2020

VICTORIAN ARTIST WINS ASHURST EMERGING ARTIST PRIZE FOR 2020 LESTER PRIZE

Kierah Falkner Babbel from Preston in Victoria was announced as the winner of the Ashurst Emerging Artist Prize as part of The Lester Prize, WA's premier fine art prize. Kierah wins \$5,000 donated by Ashurst for her acrylic on canvas portrait of her grandparents entitled *Race car ya ya*.

Serena Cowie from Malvern East Victoria was the \$50,000 winner of The Richard Lester Prize for Portraiture for her oil on canvas portrait of her two oldest friends titled *The conversation*. The winners were announced tonight at the opening Awards night at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), where the 40 finalists' works are now on public display until 29 November 2020 in the Centenary Galleries.

The Judging Panel comprised AGWA's Guest Artistic Director Ian Strange, Art Historian and Professor Dr. Clarissa Ball and Director of John Curtin Gallery Chris Malcolm who noted about Kierah's work "this effervescent portrayal of Robyn and Karl Babbel speaks to the joy of life and familial relationships. Surrounded by a cornucopia of personal belongings, this couple's flamboyance is conveyed with a quiet and respectful tenderness that is astutely balanced against a bold and courageous use of colour".

Other winners announced on the evening:

- Tony Fini Foundation Artist Prize \$10,000 (selected by artists' peers) was awarded to Sebastian Galloway from Tasmania for his portrait of Pirrin Francis titled *Warm air, cool light*;
- Two Highly Commended Prizes (\$1,000 cash, a \$550 domestic art transport voucher, \$500 framing voucher and \$250 art supplies voucher each) was awarded to Josh Cocking from Broome, WA and Daevid Anderson from Wembley Downs, WA for their respective portraits.

Still to be announced will be the \$10,000 People's Choice Prize donated by the Baldock Family, which is voted by the general public throughout the month-long exhibition.

Ashurst is a leading international law firm that is a trusted adviser to local and global corporates, financial institutions and governments on all areas of commercial law. In 2020, Ashurst became the inaugural sponsor of the \$5,000 Ashurst Emerging Artist Prize. "Ashurst is very pleased to be associated with The Lester Prize, and aims to support artists in the early stages of their careers through this prize" said Gaelan Cooney, Managing Partner of Ashurst

Formally known as The Black Swan Prize for Portraiture, this award is now in its fourteenth year. It was renamed in 2019 in honour of the award's leading patron Richard Lester AM. The Lester Prize total prize pool available to emerging and professional artists is now over \$85,000, making it one of Australia's most prestigious art competitions. This year a record number of artists entered the competition from across Australia, with more than 750 artists submitting portraits of an Australian, or Australians, that they respect or admire, or a self-portrait.

The Prize has had over 4,800 artwork entries submitted and showcased more than 1,300 finalists from across Australia since its inception. Over the last 13 years, more than 3.2 million visitors have attended its exhibition season events and activities.

The Lester Prize

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ABOUT THE LESTER PRIZE

The Lester Prize is managed by The Lester Inc, a not-for-profit organisation founded in 2007 to provide an avenue for artists to exhibit works of portraiture within Western Australia. With an annual prize pool worth over \$85,000, it is now one of the nation's most recognised and prestigious art prizes.

Working with government, peak arts bodies and community groups, it plays a critical role in helping to diversify WA's local economy, grow cultural tourism, and activate spaces through creative placemaking. The Lester Prize is proud to provide locals and visitors with the opportunity to engage with the best of the artform each year in a format that puts the artists and community front-and-centre.

The Lester Prize's exhibitions and public events program is targeted at diverse groups in the community and includes artist floor talks, workshops, live art demonstrations and pop-up community activations across the city. The Prize advocates for Australian art and artists through a full month-long exhibition season, which includes:

- Main Exhibition of original artworks at AGWA's historic Centenary Galleries – runs from 31 Oct to 29 Nov 2020
- Big Screen Displays at various locations around Perth including Perth Cultural Centre, Northbridge Piazza, Yagan Square, Myer Forrest Chase – runs Oct – Dec 2020
- Virtual Gallery, online events and creative resources – head to lesterprize.com / Linktree @lesterprize
- Youth Exhibition of original artworks at Brookfield Place Tower 2 (123-125 St Georges Tce, Perth) – runs from 2 to 27 Nov 2020
- Outdoor Salon des Refusés and Community Exhibitions at Perth Cultural Centre and Brookfield Place – runs until 27 Nov
- Exhibition Book with Guided Art Practice Tutorials – available for purchase from The Lester Prize Welcome Desk at AGWA's Centenary Galleries and lesterprize.com / Linktree @lesterprize

KEY DATES

2020 Exhibition Season at Art Gallery WA, Brookfield Place, Perth Cultural Centre, Yagan Square & various locations around Perth CBD	Sat 31 Oct – Sun 29 Nov 2020
2020 Adult Winners (Main Awards) announced	Fri 30 Oct 2020
2020 Youth Winners (Youth Awards) announced	Wed 12 Nov 2020
2020 People's Choice Prize (Adult) Winner & winning voter announced	Wed 2 Dec 2020 (5pm AWST)

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